

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 PM-07 L-03 NSC-10 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

SPC-03 SAM-01 EB-11 SAJ-01 ACDA-19 H-03 SS-20 DRC-01

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R 131552Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0426

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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USMISSION BERLIN

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AMCONSUL BREMEN

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AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 02406

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: SCHEEL SUCCESSION; GENSCHER THE MAN TO WATCH

REF: BONN 16917, 17983 (BOTH 1973), AND 00786

1. SUMMARY: IT IS NOW GENERALLY ASSUMED IN BONN THAT INTERIOR MINISTER GENSCHER WILL SUCCEED SCHEEL AS FOREIGN MINISTER AS WELL AS VICE CHANCELLOR AND FDP PARTY CHAIRMAN WHEN SCHEEL MOVES INTO THE PRESIDENCY IN MAY. WE ARE TOLD THAT CHANCELLOR BRANDT WILL KEEP CABINET CHANGES RESULTING FROM SCHEEL'S MOVE TO A MINIMUM, PENDING THE RESULTS OF THIS SPRING'S LAND ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

2. ONCE IT WAS CLEAR THAT SCHEEL WOULD BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE FEDERAL PRESIDENCY IN MAY, SPECULATION ENSUED (REFTELS) AS TO HIGH LEVEL PERSONNEL SHIFTS THAT MIGHT ENSUE. IT WAS ASSUMED FROM THE START THAT GENSCHER WOULD SUCCEED SCHEEL AS VICE CHANCELLOR AND FDP PARTY CHAIRMAN. HOWEVER, DIFFERENCES OF VIEW AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD ALSO SUCCEED SCHEEL AS FOREIGN MINISTER AROSE. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT GENSCHER HAS NO FOREIGN POLICY BACKGROUND. MOREOVER, SHRILL VOICES WERE HEARD ON THE SPD SIDE THAT IT WOULD BE OVERLY GENEROUS TO THE MINORITY PARTNER IN THE COALITION TO GIVE IT BOTH THE PRESIDENCY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND ALSO TO REPLACE GENSCHER IN THE INTERIOR MINISTRY WITH ANOTHER FDP MAN. HELMUT SCHMIDT'S NAME WAS MENTIONED AT THE TIME AS THE LIKELY SPD CHOICE FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND SCHMIDT SEEMED MORE THAN WILLING TO EXCHANGE FINANCE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

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3. HOWEVER, THE FDP DUG IN ON THE MATTER OF RETAINING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PORTFOLIO AND THE SPD LEADERSHIP HAS APPARENTLY ACQUIESCED, ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL SOME RUMBLING AT THE SPD WORKING LEVEL.

4. IT IS NOW GENERALLY ASSUMED, THEREFORE, THAT GENSCHER WILL INDEED MOVE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN

SCHEEL'S PLACE. PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INDICATION CAME FROM GENSCHER HIMSELF DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR RAISED GENSCHER'S POSSIBLE MOVE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HIS REACTION--ALTHOUGH VERBALLY CAREFUL AND DISCREET - WAS THAT OF THE CAT THAT HAD SWALLOWED THE CANARY. HE SEEMED IN NO DOUBT THAT HE WOULD BE TAKING OVER IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIELD.

5. THE MIX OF FACTORS THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THIS RESULT WAS PRESUMABLY FAIRLY BROAD. PERHAPS THE BASIC ELEMENT WAS SIMPLY THE PRESENT POLITICAL WEIGHT OF THE COALITION JUNIOR PARTNER. CURRENT OPINION POLLS AGREE THAT THE FDP CONTINUES TO MAKE PROGRESS IN POPULAR APPEAL, LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SPD. THIS FACTOR, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH CDU GAINS IN THE POLLS, SUGGESTS THAT THE SPD LEADERSHIP COULD NOT AFFORD, AS SOME OF THE PARTY MEMBERSHIP WISHED TO CONFRONT THE FDP AT THIS POINT. BRANDT WAS CLEARLY CONCERNED TO AVOID MAJOR INTRA-COALITION DISPUTES, ESPECIALLY AT A TIME WHEN SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS CO-DETERMINATION IN INDUSTRY WERE STILL NOT COMPLETELY RESOLVED. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT

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BRANDT WAS NOT PARTICULARLY INCLINED ON PERSONAL
GROUNDS TO FIGHT VERY HARD FOR SCHMIDT AS FOREIGN
MINISTER. HE IS SAID TO EYE SCHMIDT AS A POSSIBLE
THREAT TO HIS OWN LEADERSHIP OF THE SPD.

6. WHAT OTHER CHANGES IN THE CABINET MAY RESULT FROM
THE SCHEEL-GENSCHER MOVES IS STILL UNCLEAR. BRANDT IS
REFUSING TO TAKE A POSITION PUBLICLY, ASSERTING THAT
THIS IS A MATTER TO BE RESOLVED AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION IN MAY. WE ARE TOLD THAT BRANDT IS IN FACT
HOLDING OFF ANY HARD DECISIONS ON FURTHER CABINET
CHANGES (BEYOND GENSCHER) UNTIL THE RESULTS OF THIS
SPRING'S STATE ELECTION ARE IN. DEPENDING ON
THESE, HE WILL DECIDE WHETHER TO NAME AN SPD OR FDP

MAN TO THE INTERIOR POSITION. OUR SOURCES BELIEVE THAT FURTHER CABINET CHANGES ARE UNLIKELY SINCE BRANDT WANTS TO KEEP THE SHAKE-UP TO A MINIMUM TO AVOID FURTHER INTRA-COALITION STRAINS.

7. GENSCHER WILL PROBABLY BE A MORE ASSERTIVE FDP LEADER AND MORE AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN MINISTER THAN SCHEEL. HE IS A HARD-DRIVING AND AMBITIOUS POLITICIAN WHO IS APT TO MAKE THE FDP RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPD LEADERSHIP MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT HAS BEEN UNDER THE MORE MELLOW AND GENTLEMANLY SCHEEL. GENSCHER LACKS A FOREIGN POLICY BACKGROUND BUT THIS WILL PROBABLY NOT PROVE TOO GREAT A DRAWBACK IN THE LONG RUN; HE IS SMART AND ABLE AND HAS A KEEN SENSE OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT. HE IS FRIENDLY TO THE US AND WELL-DISPOSED TO THE ALLIANCE.

8. GENSCHER'S POSITION ON RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EASTERN EUROPE, ESPECIALLY THE GDR, MAY PRESENT MORE PROBLEMS FOR THE COALITION THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE SO FAR. HE HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE OSTPOLITIK CONCEPT BUT HAS BEEN A SHARP QUESTIONER OF OVER-HASTY NEGOTIATIONS BY THE FRG ON OCCASION, AND HAS QUESTIONED SOME OF THE BRANDT-BAHR TACTICS OF REACHING COMPROMISES WITH THE EAST. HE HAS ALSO BEEN A STRONG ADVOCATE OF WEST BERLIN INTERESTS, AND WAS THE MOVING FORCE BEHIND THE RECENT DECISION TO ESTABLISH THE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY IN WEST BERLIN.

9. SOME OF THIS HARD- NOSED APPROACH TO THE EAST MAY BE MODIFIED, HOWEVER, AS GENSCHER REALIZES HE WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE FOREIGN POLICY FALLOUT FROM HARD POSITIONS ON OSTPOLITIK AND BERLIN. THERE ARE ALREADY SIGNS THAT HE WILL BE MORE MODERATE IN THE FUTURE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE FDP LEADERSHIP RECENTLY DECIDED NOT TO HOLD ITS 1975 PARTY CONGRESS IN WEST BERLIN AS HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY CONSIDERED. ALSO, WE UNDERSTAND THAT GENSCHER HAS BEEN TALKING WITH A GDR REPRESENTATIVE IN BONN RECENTLY (BONN 1529) AND IS PLANNING TO VISIT HALLE, HIS OLD UNIVERSITY TOWN IN EAST GERMANY, IN EARLY MARCH. SOME THOUGHT IS ALLEGEDLY BEING GIVEN TO HIS HOLDING TALKS THERE WITH A SENIOR GDR REPRESENTATIVE. WE ALSO HAVE LEARNED THAT GENSCHER IS NO LONGER SO INTERESTED IN PUSHING FOR FURTHER ENHANCEMENT OF THE FEDERAL PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN FOR THE TIME BEING. ALL OF THIS SUGGESTS THAT, AS A PRACTICAL POLITICIAN, HE HAS RECOGNIZED THAT HE IS PERSONALLY GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE EAST IN COMING YEARS AND IS NOT NOW

SEEKING TO BURDEN HIS POSITION UNNECESSARILY.

10. FINALLY, SCHEEL HIMSELF HAS MANAGED TO CREATE SOMETHING OF A STIR RECENTLY BY HIS RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE PROPOSED TO BE A "POLITICAL PRESIDENT" WHO WOULD PARTICIPATE IN DRAFTING BASIC LINES OF GOVERNMENTAL POLICY. THIS HAS DRAWN A SHARP REBUKE FROM THE SPD WHICH HAS POINTED OUT THAT THIS IS NOT A LEGITIMATE ROLE FOR THE PRESIDENT. BRANDT IS REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY WITH SCHEEL'S PRONOUNCEMENT. GENSCHER, TOO, PROBABLY VIEWS IT WITH LESS THAN ENTHUSIASM. WE THINK IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL ALLOW SCHEEL MUCH ROOM TO INVOLVE HIMSELF EITHER IN GOVERNMENTAL MATTERS OR IN AFFAIRS OF THE FDP. GENSCHER WILL BE TOO STRONG A PARTY LEADER TO LEAVE SCHEEL ANY RESIDUAL POWER.
HILLENBRAND

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